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Three Centuries  
of an  
Old Virginia Town

The Story of Petersburg  
Its History and Memorials

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# "Three Centuries of an Old Virginia Town"

## Petersburg and the Appomattox

By Arthur Kyle Davis

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### Petersburg and the Appomattox

No city in America has more vital links connecting it with the crucial periods of the national history than has Petersburg. It was the objective point of Cornwallis when he struck north after his Carolina campaign, and it was the objective point of Grant when he struck south after his Wilderness Campaign and Cold Harbor. In each case, it was the turning point of destiny, and at Petersburg were enacted the opening scenes of the last acts of the two great war dramas that closed at Yorktown and at Appomattox.

Petersburg is a palimpsest written upon by each of the five periods of American history. Beneath the fair writing of this modern day there are still visible the red strokes of the Civil war. Beneath this, however, may still be read the story of a strong and cultured people, active and successful in the national period. Then come the grim tracings of the wars with England, and beneath them the sturdy strokes of the colonists have left their deeds "writ large," with markings of the Indian period still visible to the careful eye. Thus Petersburg is the most interesting city in America, for the reason that each age has left upon it an impress that has not been effaced by the attrition of the new era.

### PART I—GENERAL OUTLINE

#### Three Centuries

Here lived perhaps Pocahontas and probably that Queene of Appamatuck that brought Smith water to wash his hands. Nearby was the site of the East India School established by the colonists, and yet nearer, the site of Pierce's plantation, where four of the

settlers were killed in the first Indian massacre. Thus, Petersburg has a clear line of descent of three centuries. It was Appamatuck on Smith's map of Virginia in 1612; it was Peter's Point in the commercial history of 1712; it was the Cockade City in the war history of 1812, and it is the Petersburg of world history in 1912.

#### Early Events

Old Fort Henry, built in 1645-6, was the nucleus of the original town, and a suburb of the city today is said to be the site of the Indian village destroyed in 1676 by the "Virginia Rebel," Nathaniel Bacon.

Two famous early expeditions set out from Petersburg. Thomas Batte and his companions set out in 1671 to explore the Western country by command of Major-General Wood of Fort Henry, and these men made the first crossing of the mountains by the English. It was from Bellevue, still a suburban home of Petersburg, that John May and Charles Johnson departed in 1790 for that fateful journey down the Kanawha and Ohio that was to bring death to May and suffering and fame to Johnson, as told in his famous Narrative. Two other expeditions ended at Petersburg, for here Col. William Byrd relapsed into luxury on his return from the "Dividing Line" in 1728 and here he laid the foundation of the city on his return from the Land of Eden in 1733, as related in the West-over Manuscripts.

Not all the historic sites of Petersburg, however, have been made famous by war or daring. The arts of peace and the amenities of life have also their memorials. Especially interesting are three famous banquets in which Petersburg showed its hospital-



ity. Here President Washington was feasted during his southern tour in 1791, and here General LaFayette was feted forty years after his first visit during his American tour in 1824. Here too, Vice President Aaron Burr, on his way south in 1805, was honored with a great banquet, equal to those that marked the coming of the Father of his Country and of the Hero of Two Worlds.

Thus the historical sites, memorials, and buildings of Petersburg, with the grim cordon of forts and battle lines of two great wars, form a series of object lessons in American life in peace and war, and the city itself may fairly be called an epitome of American history.

### Famous Sites

Here are found Indian relics, sites and traditions; one of the first colonial forts, the first permanent outpost south of the James; an early trading station, from which the city derives its name; the two famous "Castles" of the founder's grandson; old taverns, duelling grounds and race-courses; sites of the Revolutionary period, made famous by the great leaders on both sides; a fine colonial mansion used as headquarters by a British general and described by the Marquis de Chastellux in his Travels; the site of the historic home in which General Phillips died; the old bridge, torn up, rebuilt and burned by the contending armies on two successive days; the church where Whitfield preached his sermon to critical ears, and the spot where the fiery preaching of the evangelist Williams was cooled by a fire hose.

About 1800 began another series of historic sites. Here was the early theater, where the Petersburg Thespians acted, succeeded by one of the most famous early theatres in America, which was visited by all of the great actors of the earlier part of the century. Here Burk wrote the first early history of Virginia and fell in a duel. Asbury's Journal tells how Petersburg was often visited in his itinerary and how he and Bishop Coke found warm welcome here. The law office of General Winfield Scott may still be seen, as may the home where Calhoun's body lay in state at a later time. The very streets of the city in

definite series record the national period of American history.

The Civil war left its impress upon the city and made a third group of historic sites. The three headquarters of General Lee mark the gradual recession during the longest siege in American history. President Davis stopped here on his way to Richmond, and Lincoln and Grant made two homes famous by their visits. The four lines of the fortifications may still be traced around the city, and here were scenes of great battles and of the famous explosion of the Crater. Perhaps most striking and reverend of all, within sight of the Crater itself, stands a beautiful old colonial church and churchyard, containing memorials, graves, and epitaphs of wonderful interest.

### Old Blandford Church

Probably the most unique memorial in America is this church, known as old Blandford or Bristol Parish Church. Few spots may be compared with it in sacredness or inspiration. "Standing in quiet beauty amid acres of heroic dust" it thrills the visitor as does no other spot in America save Mount Vernon itself. Around it have surged the combats of two great struggles, but two war dates stand out in local history. One is the Ninth of June, 1864, when the volunteer citizen-soldiers held back Kautz's raid; and the other is the thirtieth of July, 1864, when the Burnside Mine was exploded and the Crater fight took place. Both of these events have fitting memorials here, where thirty-thousand Confederate dead lie buried, while there are close at hand stately monuments to the thousands of Federal soldiers that rest in the Federal cemeteries.

### History and Romance

Romance and pathos combine with history around the old church, and about it have ebbed and flowed the very life tides of the city and nation. In the southeast corner of the churchyard, under foilage of ivy and periwinkles, lies buried General Phillips, called by Jefferson "the proudest man of the proudest nation on earth." Here it was that Baron Steuben made his first stand against Phillips and Arnold in the defense of Petersburg in the Revolution. Here it was that the Washington memorial service was



held in 1799, and here in 1826 was held the Jefferson memorial service. Parson Syme was interrupted in this service by the alarm of the great fire, second only to the greater fire of 1815. In the shadow of these walls was fought the Jeffreys-Johnson duel in 1795, and the Boisseau-Adams duel in 1821. In the church itself in 1844 Antommattie killed himself for love, and just outside the churchyard (as a suicide might not be buried in holy ground) stands the tombstone, paid for with money collected in Corsica, with the inscription, "Honor was his only vice."

In the Civil war, the bloody lines of circumvallation barely missed the confines of the cemetery, and at least one monument was shattered by the artillery fire.

### A Virginia Pantheon

Thus, old Blandford church, with its Colonial and Revolutionary history, with its simple memorial tablet to an early rector, with its beautiful D. A. R. memorial in honor of the men of the Revolution, with its eleven Tiffany Apostle windows commemorating the Confederate States (and two to Missouri and Maryland), with its eloquently simple U. D. C. honor roll of the citizen-heroes of the Ninth of June, with its stately marble tablet to the immortal Crater Legion, and with its touching memorial to the leader of their charge, seems a real focus of American history and a veritable Pantheon of Confederate heroism.

The Burk cenotaph and the Blandford Poem connect the church also with American literature. The famous lines on the old church make the nearest approach to an American "Elegy." This poem is certainly the most beautiful spontaneous tribute to any church in America. The cenotaph to John Daly Burk, the fiery Irishman and the author of the most famous early history of Virginia, is just outside the walls of the church, and in the distance may be seen Fleet's Hill, where Burk fell in a duel.

The McRae Monument near at hand completes the war memorials of the church. Not only does the inscription tell of the valor of the Petersburg Volunteers of 1812, but the five panels of the enclosure show also the arms that they bore. The flint-lock muskets and sabers crossed; the stiff military cap and pompon; the belt and ammuni-

tion-box; the garlands and wreaths; the American shield with the eagle and cannon; the battle-axes at the corners and the seventeen stars above the rail; all these things bespeak the robust militant patriotism of an earlier day. Here all the panoply of war is displayed in this memorial of the daring of one company, while yonder in the church the deeds of tens of thousands are commemorated by simple tablets and holy emblems, with not a sign of war to mar the sacred precincts.

## PART II—THE RIVER HISTORY

### The Appomattox

The story of Petersburg begins naturally with the river. The Appomattox, like other Virginia rivers, was both an entering wedge of civilization and a colonial link and highway. Here Petersburg history begins with the planting of a fort by the settlers in the time of Governor Berkley, and the site of Old Fort Henry is today the spot of earliest authentic interest. The fifteen-mile river stretch from Bellevue just above Petersburg, to City Point at the junction of the James, is scarcely surpassed in America for variety and intensity of interest. Every bluff was a plantation home and every wharf was a port of entry.

### Matoax to Fort Henry

Randolph of Roanoke was born on these banks, and his father and mother lie buried within sound of the falls of the river. These two graves, with their quaint Latin inscriptions, lend special interest to Matoax above the falls, Matoax was the private name of Pocahontas, and it was from Matoax that John Randolph's mother fled with him to Bizarre at the time of Arnold's threatened invasion. Nearby are Olive Hill, the Atkinson home, and Bellevue, the home of John May, where Johnston's Narrative opens. Across the river from Matoax the line of suburban estates begins with two other Atkinson homes, well-preserved Mansfield and Sysonby. Following the river to the city limits, the first historic mansion of the colonial days is Battersea, the home of the Banisters. This home, an excellent example of colonial architecture, was occupied during the Revolution by the British



under Simcoe, and was visited after the war by the Marquis de Chastellux and was described by him in his Travels.

On a high bluff at the foot of the falls stand the Dunlop house, built on the site of Old Fort Henry; and directly across the river is Fleet's Hill, where Burk fell in his famous duel with Coquebert in 1808.

### Campbell's Bridge

Here Campbell's bridge spans the narrow gorge, and it was at this bridge that Burk's eleven-year old son, John, learned of his father's death. He had spent the week end at Olive Hill with his schoolmate, Tom Atkinson, and on that Monday morning the two boys had seen the duelling ground wet with blood as they came past Fleet's Hill on their way to school in town. John Junius Burk was later Judge Burk, of Louisiana, when a Petersburg Robertson became Governor of that State, and Thomas Pleasants Atkinson afterwards wrote his reminiscences of Petersburg in the interesting "Moratock Papers."

It was over Campbell's bridge that General Lee's army passed on the night of April 2nd, 1865, in the retreat that ended at Appomattox.

### Peter's Point

A short distance down on the south bank and in the very heart of the city itself is the birthplace of Petersburg, the old Trading Station of Peter Jones, from whom the city derived its name long before 1733, when Colonel William Byrd with his four companions "laid the foundation" of the two cities, Petersburg and Richmond, as told in his Westover Manuscripts. It is worthy of note that two Petersburgers, Banister and Jones, were among the four companions of Colonel Byrd in this "founding" of the two cities, and while "Shocco's" became Richmond, "Peter's Point" became Petersburg.

### Opposite the City

Further down the river on the northern bank are the high bluffs overlooking the city, now called Colonial Heights. Here may be seen the remarkable box hedge at Oak Hill, said to be the oldest in America. This is

on Archer's (or Hector's or Dunn's) Hill, from which Lafayette shelled Petersburg during the Revolution, when it was occupied by the British under Arnold, Phillips, and Cornwallis. Here was Hector's Spring and the bridge over which the gay cavalcades came trooping on the Fourth of July long ago. Winding down from Colonial Heights is the road along which General Washington came with his escort of honor on his historic visit in 1791, and along which a third of a century later, LaFayette came into Petersburg in 1824, when he was welcomed as a hero by the city. On the next bluff is historic Violet Bank, the home of the Shores, the first headquarters of General Lee during the siege of Petersburg. The Conjuror's Neck Road leads from Violet Bank past Roslyn, the home of the Gambles to Brick House, the home of the Kennons. In the lowlands here opposite the city is the suburb of Pocahontas, once "Witten Town," where stood for years an interesting relic of Indian times, the "Pocahontas Basin," now transferred to the Courthouse.

### Pocahontas Bridge

Connecting this suburb of Pocahontas with the city is the historic Pocahontas bridge. Torn up on April 26th, 1781, by the retreating Americans under Steuben, rebuilt on the next day for the passage of the English under Phillips, and then burned while the shipping flamed in the harbor, its ruins were seen by the Marquis de Chastellux, when in the same year he visited Spencer's Tavern beside the bridge and praised the fish and the music of the tavern. Here in 1812, an armed schooner fired a salute of honor to the departing Petersburg Volunteers; and here too, in 1858, the Petersburg Artillery fired a salute of thirteen guns on the arrival of the Southern Star, the first steamship that ever came to Petersburg, about ten years after the first telegraph message was sent from Petersburg to Norfolk. Below the bridge lies the harbor, and adjoining the town is the suburb of Blandford, which was once a center of industry and fashion. Here Haffey established the first nail factory in this part of the country, and here the Old Tavern and Boyd's Tavern and the Rising Sun were places of



resort. Here a famous Petersburger had his law office in a modest building, still standing, before he became the hero of two wars as General Winfield Scott.

### Below the City

Below the city, the river flows on past Clifton and Brick House on the left bank, and past Greencroft, the home of the Skipwiths, and Puddledock, the home of the Stiths and Herberts, to famous Port Walthall. This was once the port both of Petersburg and of Richmond, whence the Virginia flour was shipped for decades for the South American trade. This place derived its name from the Walthalls, whose Valley Farm house was said to be the first built between the Appomattox and the James. Almost opposite is Gatling's or Spring Hill, where the sunken area still shows the effect of the mysterious landslide of twenty years ago. Then comes classic Tusculum, the home of the Gilliams, on the right, and historic Cobb's, home of the Bollings on the left, where the first deaf-mute school in America was established. This was the headquarters of General Butler during the Civil war. Here he had his signal tower visible from Petersburg, and just below is the lofty Point of Rocks.

### Broadway

Below this Point, nine miles from Petersburg, is historic Broadway, where landed the French Huguenot refugees for whom the Assembly made provision of food and land and who later settled in Powhatan county. Here General Smallwood checked the first advance of Arnold's fleet in 1781, and here General Grant had his pontoon bridge in the Civil war. Over this pontoon bridge, on the night of the Ninth of June, 1864, were marched the Petersburg soldiers captured in Kautz's Raid, and one of the prisoners, Anthony Keiley, has told the story of this march and of his interesting interviews with Kautz and Butler.

From Broadway, the river flows on past Mitchell's and past Cawson's, the early home of the Blands where John Randolph was born, and past Kippax, the first home of the Bollings, until it broadens out in sight

of beautiful Appamattox, for nearly three centuries owned by the Eppes family. Here is quiet City Point, twice alive with hostile troops and munitions, while on the further bank lies Bermuda Hundred and between them the picturesque Appomattox blends into the stately James.

### City Point and Petersburg

Both Bermuda Hundred and City Point are closely knit to Petersburg history. It was at Bermuda Hundred, the 1611 settlement of Sir Thomas Dale, that the first Bristol Parish church was built, succeeded by the Ferry Chapel, nearer to Petersburg, and later (in 1735) by the Wells Hill church or Old Blandford itself, as told in Bishop Meade's "Old Churches." City Point, or Charles City Point, just missed being the first settlement, as Newport left his ships on his arrival in Virginia and coasted in a shallop to this point in his exploration, before returning and bringing his ships further up the river to make a landing at Jamestown. Here the East India school was established in 1621 to be a feeder to Henrico college. In the Revolution, it was at City Point that part of the British forces of Phillips landed for the advance on Petersburg, while the sick leader himself was borne by carriage from Westover. In slave days, the Petersburg officers here took steamer in 1858 in their hurried pursuit of the kidnapping schooner "Keziah," which was bearing off five runaway slaves. The steamer in which the pursuit was made was called the W. W. Townes. City Point was Grant's base of supplies in the siege of Petersburg, and he built from this point a military railroad of twelve or fifteen miles, entirely within his direct and reverse line of fortifications around Petersburg. Here President Lincoln landed on his visit to the evacuated city.

It is interesting to note that while the James lost its Indian name of Powhatan and kept the royal English title, the Appomattox threw off its imported name of the Bristol and reverted to the original Indian name. The old English name of the river is still preserved, however, in the name of Bristol parish mentioned above.



## PART III—THE CITY HISTORY.

### Bollingbrook

These river estates, however, with all their charm of colonial life and cheer, are second in interest to the historic mansions in Petersburg itself. Even more famous than the Battersea house already mentioned is East Hill or Bollingbrook, the site of the colonial home of the Bollings. This house was twice the headquarters of the British during the Revolution. All the inmates had to take refuge in the cellar during the shelling by Lafayette, and one cannon-ball passed through the house and killed the cook. Here Arnold, with his Saratoga limp, dandled the children, and here General Phillips, lying on his death-bed, complained that the Americans would not even let him die in peace. From this home Cornwallis wrote in boastful vein of Lafayette, that "the boy" could not escape him now.

### The Castles

Two famous wooden "castles" in the city were built by Peter Jones the Second, grandson of Peter Jones the trader, and both are now occupied as residences. The first is "Folly Castle" on Washington street, built in 1763 and now occupied by Mr. Munt. This house was originally named from the folly of its then childless owner in building so large a house. Davis street, which bordered the estate, was formerly called Folly street.

The second of the "castles" is "Stirling Castle" on High street, now the residence of Mrs. Spotswood. This was originally the country house of Peter Jones the Second, but after his death his daughter had the house moved to Petersburg and erected on the spot where it now stands. Two other wooden mansions of somewhat similar style have an interesting history. One is the Bennet-Shore mansion at the corner of Adams and Marshall streets, now the Orr home. The original house, built more than a century ago, was an exact copy of the Shore home known as Violet Bank, built a few years earlier but later destroyed by fire. On Adams street behind the Orr house is the old Johnson-Wyatt mansion, now occupied by Mr. Barham, where the body of Calhoun lay in state.

Another attractive old-time mansion of local interest is the West Hill house, with its solid basement and quaint dormer windows. This house was built by the Bollings for the steward of their estate, and it faced their long line of tobacco warehouses that stood on West Hill.

### The Residency

Prison Hill Mansion on Tabb street has for years been one of the interesting sights of the city, but it is still somewhat a puzzle. So far as may be learned, this handsome two-story wooden mansion, with a lofty stone and brick basement, was formerly used as a residency or official home by some agent of the crown in colonial days. It stood in the midst of spacious grounds extending from the High School building on the south to the creek on the north. The two stone pillars of the entrance gates still stand at the end of Marshall street. A winding driveway led to the front of the house, and two curving staircases led to the porch of the mansion, which was perched high above the stone basement, where may still be seen the cells used for the detention of prisoners. This arrangement of a dwelling-house over a prison seems strange today, but the same plan may be seen in the sheriff's house standing in Blandford, which was prison below and residence above.

### The Historians

The historian, John Daly Burk, had no home of his own, but boarded at the house of Mrs. Swayle (or Swail) on Old Street, near the old LeMoine house. Burk was a lawyer with an office on Bollingbrook Street near Phoenix. He was a great friend of John Randolph, who aided him in securing materials for his history. His famous quarrel with Coquebert at the time of the Berlin and Milan Decrees occurred in the Powell Tavern on Sycamore Street, where the Rosenstock Stores now stand. He fought the duel in a ravine back of the Normal School and was buried with military honors in an unmarked grave at Cedar Grove, the residence of General Joseph Jones in the southwestern part of the city. This land, later the property of A. G. McIlwaine, was near the Mount Airy Railroad Shops.



The duel was not the only one that interrupted the writing of this Virginia history. Skelton Jones, who began the fourth volume, also fell on the "field of honor" after writing sixty-three pages, and the history was completed by Girardin.

The second Petersburg historian, often called the Virginia Old Mortality, was Charles Campbell. He had his residence here, as his father was the first bookseller of the city. In addition to his excellent History of Virginia, Campbell wrote also a Life of Burk and many antiquarian essays.

Three other Virginia historians should be mentioned, as they were rectors here. Both William Stith, who wrote a History of Virginia, and Bishop William Meade, who wrote "Old Churches and Families of Virginia," served for a short time as rectors; Stith at Old Blandford in 1739, and Meade at St. Paul's in 1839. A third rector of long service, Phillip Slaughter, wrote the History of Bristol Parish and also of St. George's and of St. Mark's Parishes.

### The Warriors

Within the city was also the home of Captain McRae, who led the Petersburg volunteers in the War of 1812, and who won for Petersburg from President Madison the title of "The Cockade City of the Union." Here is also the home of Colonel F. H. Archer, who led the Petersburg volunteers in the Mexican war, and also commanded the old men and boys on the ninth of June. On Market street is also the residence of General Mahone, the hero of the battle of the Crater. It is necessary, however, to go outside the city limits to a farm beyond the Mayfield estate to find the birthplace of the Petersburgher most famous in the war annals of America. Here was born General Winfield Scott, hero of the War of 1812 and of the Mexican War and commander-in-chief of the American forces at the opening of the Civil war. General Scott had a law office in Blandford and later in Petersburg, probably on Bollingbrook street, until he abandoned the law for the army in 1808. That he was not entirely a hero in the eyes of his fellows, however, is shown by the famous toast of a distinguished Petersburgher, Benjamin Watkins Leigh,

at the Eagle Tavern dinner, given in honor of General Scott after the War of 1812. In the midst of the chorus of praise of the hero of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, Leigh's simple toast was, "Well, Scott, Here's to Luck."

Two Petersburg stories of General Scott may be added. At Vera Cruz after the Mexican War, he was urged to return home in one of the larger vessels provided for the transport of troops, but generously refused to do so, on the ground that he might thus delay the return home of many a brave soldier anxious for a sight of his dear ones. He embarked on the brig "Petersburg," of 166 tons, and on the voyage yellow fever broke out and Scott caught the fever and narrowly escaped death.

On the other hand may be mentioned the traditions still current, that the general was a pompous man, rather proud of his appearance, and this seems to be borne out by the well authenticated story of the notice in a Petersburg paper that on a certain day General Scott "may be seen at Powell's hotel in the full uniform that he wore in the Mexican War."

### Civil War Mansions

Three of the mansions of Petersburg are especially famous in the history of the Civil war. These are the Beasley mansion on High street, interesting as the second headquarters of General Lee; the Seward Mansion on Market street, where occurred the last meeting of Lincoln and Grant before the surrender of Lee; and the Centre Hill mansion, which still shows the effects of the shelling of Battery Number Five, having a cannon-hole in the northern wall and bullet-holes in the attic doors. This was General Hartstuff's headquarters, and it was here that Lincoln, just after the evacuation, made his famous mot, "General Grant seems to have attended sufficiently to the matter of rent."

One of the interesting features of this mansion is the underground passage, which led out to Henry street and was used as an entrance by visitors. The broad passage terminated on Henry street in a pavillion or porte cochere, where the visitors dismounted from their carriages, entering the house on the basement level and going upstairs to the parlor floor, in



the English rather than the American style. Some fifty feet of this passage may still be entered, and it was lighted from above so as to be quite bright and well ventilated.

### The Centre Hill Banquet

This Centre Hill Mansion, the residence of Mr. Charles Hall Davis, was the fitting scene of a notable aftermath of the Civil War, when it was tendered to the city of Petersburg for the banquet and reception to President Taft on the occasion of the dedication of the Hart-Ranft Monument at Fort Mahone in honor of the Pennsylvania soldiers of the Civil War. After the parade and dedication ceremonies, an *al fresco* luncheon was served on the Centre Hill lawn to one thousand distinguished guests, seated at a hundred tables of living turf. The speakers' table extended along the fifty-foot south portico, looking out on the lawn, and here, with Governor Swanson as toastmaster, three notable toasts were given: "Petersburg," by Hon. William B. McIlwaine; "Virginia," by Dr. Edwin A. Alderman, president of the University of Virginia; and "Pennsylvania," by Governor Edwin S. Stuart, of Pennsylvania. The city's guests then passed through the mansion to the north lawn, where President Taft made his eloquent address to twenty thousand people. In the evening a brilliant reception and lawn fete followed, when Admiral Sigsbee spoke on the "American Sailor," and Ambassador Jusserand on the "American Soldier." This Civil War mansion was a most fitting scene for such a reunion of the Blue and Gray, and the ideal setting, the distinguished guests, and the eloquent speakers, made this the most brilliant banquet ever given in Virginia.

### Four Famous Taverns

Four old taverns of Petersburg have a part in history. Probably the oldest was the Golden Ball Tavern on Old street, where may still be seen a part of the old building at the corner of Market street, almost opposite Peter Jones's Trading Station. Here the British officers were quartered during the Revolution, and here the first famous city banquet was given to President Washington in 1791. This visit is also notable for the reason that at Petersburg Washington told his only recorded untruth, in fixing his time of departure "before eight" and leaving at five to avoid the

dust of an escort. At this time the Golden Ball Tavern had become Durrell's Tavern, and in 1823 it had become Tench's Tavern. It was probably as Tench's Tavern that it had its iron gong struck at noon by an iron negro with an iron mace. Another tavern of Revolutionary fame was the Long Oratory, a mile west of the center of the city, where were the headquarters of the British General O'Hara, who later surrendered Cornwallis's sword at Yorktown. The third of the historic taverns was Armistead's, better known later as Powell's Tavern. General Washington is said to have spent the night here, and it is probable that it was here that the banquet to Aaron Burr was given in 1805. Burr had killed Hamilton and was far from popular at the time, and this public banquet in his honor seems strange. Probably it was arranged by the effort and influence of Burk, who had been aided by Burr in his escape from the wrath of President Adams at Boston.

As Burk was a frequenter of Powell's Tavern, the Burr banquet probably occurred there. In this connection, it may be added that a Petersburg lawyer, a famous wit, who was popular as "Jack" Baker, was one of the counsel of Aaron Burr in his trial at Richmond on the charge of treason on account of the projects undertaken during this trip to the south.

The last of the four famous taverns was Niblo's Tavern on Bollingbrook street. Here it was that the Lafayette banquet was given in 1824 and in 1828 the tavern was replaced by Niblo's Hotel, a sixty-five thousand dollar structure still standing, which was built by William Niblo, afterward proprietor of Niblo's Garden in New York.

### Other Taverns

Of secondary interest were several other taverns. Dodson's Tavern on High street is memorable for the fact that here Theodosia Burr made famous cakes during her stay there with her father. Brewer's Tavern stood on the southeast corner of Sycamore and Bollingbrook streets, and on Lombard street was the Double Inn, just off Sycamore. The Virginia Inn stood on a cross street between Lombard and Bollingbrook. There was also Worsham's Tavern on Old street, af-



terward the home of J. B. Edge, whose bell gave the first alarm of the fire of 1826; and Weeks' Tavern on Sycamore street, where Bowman's stores now stand. This tavern was a convenient stopping place for the country people coming into the city through Week's Cut, now Wythe street. It was at Hannon's Tavern on Bank street in 1825 that the foundations of the Mechanics' Association were laid.

Third street was the thoroughfare in the olden days and Jack McCray's eating house stood on the corner of Bollingbrook and Second, just opposite the present Stratford. But further down Bollingbrook stood the inn of Petersburg that gives a real eighteenth-century aroma to local history. This was the Coffee House of Zip Roberts that stood behind old Phoenix Hall and gave to the cross street from Bollingbrook to the river the name of Coffeehouse Lane.

### The Race Courses

The people of the city seem to have been a gay and worldly folk much given to pleasure, with two theatres, two parks, a racecourse, and only one poor Methodist church in 1799. The first racecourse seems to have been in Gill Field, and there is an interesting record of a race there when the famous horse Brenner went to pieces. Two other racecourses were established by the man from whom Bate's Spring derives its name. Richard Bates was a contractor who busied himself with the river improvement until the funds were exhausted. Then he ran a lottery and later engaged in the mill business. Failing in these things, he leased Poplar Lawn and established there the second Petersburg racecourse. Still later he established the third and most famous of them all, the Newmarket racecourse, which was known throughout America and where many great races took place.

### The Theatres

The present Academy of Music is the fourth theatre in the history of the city. Queerly enough, the first definite mention of the first theatre seems to be the account of the Methodist meetings in the Old Theatre on Old street, near Murray's Mill. The account is still extant of the evangelistic meet-

ings of Williams, McRoberts and Jarrott in this Old Theatre in 1773. They preached with fervor to large congregations, but their meetings were interrupted by the bursting in of doors, the throwing of squibs, and the deluging with water from a fire hose. The second theatre was a poor affair, a small wooden building that stood on Fifth street, behind the old Dunlop place, near the school of Parson Syme. Here the Petersburg Amateur Thespians, in 1803, acted Burk's play of Bethlem Gabor, and here the actor Placide and his company are known to have acted in the same year, when they gave the School for Scandal at a benefit performance. A second play written for the Petersburg Thespians was Nolens Volens, or The Biter Bit, by Everard Hill of Blandford. The Thespians were the best young men of the day, John Monro Banister, Townsend Stith, Roger Atkinson Jones, Thomas Bolling Robertson, Benjamin Curtis, Richard N. Thweatt, Edwards, Stainback, and others. Among them was the Petersburg poet, John McCreery, who wrote The American Star, the rival of The Star Spangled Banner, and who also wrote with Burk the songs that are said to have given Moore the idea of the Irish Melodies.

The great playhouse of the city, however, was the Petersburg Theatre built probably about 1815 or 1820 on the northwest corner of Bollingbrook and Fifth streets. This theatre was a copy of Covent Garden Theatre in London, with a commodious stage, a large pit, a semi-circle of stalls, and two galleries. Junius Brutus Booth is said to have played here his second engagement in America, his first engagement, having been in the Marshall Theatre in Richmond. It was due to the money and efforts of a Britisher named Caldwell that this playhouse was built in such handsome style. Mr. Caldwell was a successful merchant of the city, who owned and named the estate at the head of Sycamore street still called Mount Erin. Most of the famous actors of the second quarter of the century played here, and this is the theatre so often mentioned in the annals of the American stage. It was burned in 1849, however, and there are many interesting facts connected with the hall that succeeded it.

The LaFayette Ball was given in this third Petersburg theatre. The pit



was floored over, the stage was hung with pink and roofed with blue, with a palace scene at the end. The top tier of boxes was filled with evergreens, reaching to the vaulted roof. The two lower tiers of boxes were reserved for the gentlemen until LaFayette had made the circle of the ladies in the rotunda, when he retired to his seat of honor and ten cotillion sets were danced at once. This was after the banquet in Niblo's Long Room.

### The Halls

Phoenix Hall, like a phoenix from the ashes, rose on the site of the famous theatre. This is the first of three memorable halls of Petersburg. As religion advanced, the theatre declined, and these three halls played a notable part in the lecture or lyceum period that followed. The democratic convention of 1858 met in Phoenix Hall to nominate John Letcher, the war governor of Virginia. There is mention of a lecture and panorama of the Crimean war in the following year, and here Blind Tom played in the first year of the Civil war. Phoenix Hall was burned in 1866. It was here that the actor, Tyrone Power gave the plays that made him such a favorite in the city. He came frequently; and it is to his pen—or pencil—that most people attribute the famous lines on Old Blandford Church. Dr. J. H. Claiborne, however, in his "Seventy-five Years in Old Virginia," gives facts that lend color to the belief that they were written by Miss Henning, a daughter of Chief-Justice Henning, who was afterwards Mrs. Schermerhorn.

Thus in Phoenix Hall, both before and during the war, occurred many notable affairs. Here Stephen A. Douglas, the "Little Giant," spoke about 1860, and William L. Yancey of Alabama also made a famous political speech. On April 2nd, 1864, just one year before the evacuation of the city, Miss Estelle's Dramatic Company played here "The Carpenter of Rouen," followed by a fascinating danseuse—admission, three dollars. At this time the stock of the Bank of the City of Petersburg was selling at two hundred dollars.

The second of the memorable halls was the Mechanics' Hall at the corner of Sycamore and Tabb street, built 1839. Here Dr. Kane, on his re-

turn from his Arctic expedition, gave a great lecture and panorama and exhibited his Eskimo dogs. The third hall was Library Hall, now the offices of the Electric company, and this was used for many great lectures and concerts. It was either here or at Phoenix Hall that Thackeray gave his lecture on the Four Georges. Here were also given famous local events such as the Kirmess of Mischianza and the Congress of Nations.

### Old Hotels

As the halls succeeded the theatres, so the hotels succeeded the taverns and inns. Niblo's hotel, now the Stratford, was for many years notable as the Bollingbrook, where many of the prominent men of the second quarter of the century were guests, and where almost all of the southern leaders were familiar figures during the siege of Petersburg. The Fourth of July oration was often delivered from the balcony of this hotel, in the period after the popularity of Hector's Spring and before the Poplar Lawn was used for this purpose.

One of the most dramatic incidents in the history of Petersburg took place just at the corner where this hotel stands. Here was erected the only Secession Pole ever raised in Petersburg, bearing the Secession flag, called the Bonnie Blue Flag, a blue flag with a single white star. That night a crowd of one hundred men pulled down the pole and destroyed the flag, one man being killed in the melee. For Petersburg was a strong Union city, sending Union delegates to the Virginia convention, whose votes were not cast for secession until President Lincoln published his call for troops.

Some say that this Secession Pole was further down Bollingbrook Street, at the Library Hall corner, but all agree it was within a block or two of the Hotel.

An interesting war time story is told in connection with the Longstreet banquet given in Bollingbrook hotel during the siege. A gallant Petersburg private, fond of fighting and of good cheer but impatient of the routine of camp, had that day "run the block" and come into the city. At the banquet, this prince of good fellows was seated at the right hand of General Longstreet and opposite his corps commander, General A.



P. Hill. During the dinner, a detail of soldiers appeared at the door, sent to arrest the private, and he was saved only by the prompt action of General Hill, either by writing a pass for him, as some say, or by making him a member of his staff on the spot, as others claim. This was the well-known "Dick" May, of the same family as the John May who ventured with Johnson among the Indians in 1790.

Powell's Hotel on Sycamore street succeeded Powell's Tavern in 1843, and was a popular resort until it was destroyed by fire. It was succeeded in turn by the great Iron Front building, where provisions were contributed for the soldiers during the war, by the Christian Association Buildings, and by the present stores. So often has this area been burned over in the last half-century.

Of like local interest with these hotels and of about the same date was Jarratt's Hotel, built on the site of Moss's Tavern, where the A. C. L. upper depot now stands. Here was the terminus of the old Petersburg railroad, chartered in 1830, one of the first railroads in the country, and for many years this was a famous hostelry. Alexander H. Stephens, as a congressman before the war, used to stop here on his way to and from Washington, and here too President Davis stopped on his way to Richmond to take charge of the Confederate government there. All of these old hotels did a flourishing business, especially for several decades before the civil war. Petersburg was the center of a most prosperous section, and the planters for miles around would come to the city and spend several weeks during the season. For the city had a season then, with all the diversions for which the state has been famous. As mentioned above, one of the handsome theatres of the south was here, and even in the decade before the war, when there were only the three halls, there was no lack of entertainments both amusing and instructive. Phoenix hall had a regular stock company, and only the theatrical stars were imported to take the principal roles. All these attractions added to the patronage of the hotels.

### A Famous Park

The oldest of the parks in Petersburg was Poplar Lawn, which keeps its beau-

ty but not the charm of its old name as Central Park. Instead of the beautiful grove of today, however, it was formerly a perfect stretch of greensward, a lawn indeed.

On Poplar Lawn the Petersburg Volunteers were encamped in 1812 before they set out for the Canadian border, and on October 21st, 1812, Benjamin Watkins Leigh here presented them with a flag from the ladies of the city. To Poplar Lawn in 1824 came LaFayette and his friends from the banquet at Niblo's Tavern to hear speeches and to listen to the songs of four hundred school children from Anderson school. It was either here or at Centre Hill that Judge James H. Gholson on Jan. 2nd, 1847, on the part of the ladies of the city, presented a flag to Captain F. H. Archer's company on the eve of their departure for the Mexican war, and the members of the Petersburg bar presented a sword to Captain Archer himself.

The city bought the Lawn for \$15,000 in 1844, and the Fourth of July parades began and ended here. In fact, all the military companies of the city used to encamp on Poplar Lawn on the evening of the third, and the parade of the Fourth was followed by the reading of the Declaration of Independence and an oration by some distinguished citizen. The Lawn was not only a drilling-ground for soldiers, but also an open-air forum, where in the old days such orators as Henry Clay addressed the people.

The most dramatic day in the history of Poplar Lawn was the Nineteenth of April, 1861, immediately after the secession of Virginia, when six fully equipped companies were enlisted into the service of the Confederacy, leaving Poplar Lawn the next morning for the defense of Norfolk.

A true story of Poplar Lawn shows the straits to which the city was reduced during the siege. As the Federal shells were falling around the hospital on the Lawn, it was necessary to hoist a hospital flag there. No such flag of truce could be found in the city, and for lack of any other yellow cloth, the yellow silk petticoat of a patriotic lady of the city was hoisted on the hospital pole. This petticoat is still preserved.

West End Park, formerly the Fair Grounds, is worthy of mention as the place where the Federal soldiers were encamped during Reconstruction times. Not only both the parks and other open spaces, but also almost all the large buildings, especially the tobacco factories and warehouses, were used during the siege either as hospitals or as prisons.



## Historic Schools

Four of the schools of Petersburg are closely connected with its history, and three of them are part of the story of the siege of Petersburg. Earliest of these is "The Academy" incorporated in 1794 and continued until 1835, when all its property was transferred to Anderson Seminary, named in memory of the Scotchman who left a bequest in 1819 for the education of the poor of the city. The Academy was succeeded by the Petersburg Classical Academy, which was taught by Principal Saunders in the building since used as the public high school on Union street.

The first academy is memorable both for its early origin and also for a famous teacher. In the early years of the last century, about 1808, John Davis, an Englishman, was a teacher here. He wrote a novel about Pocahontas that was ridiculed by the *Edinburgh Review* in 1806, and also a volume of *Travels in America* that was praised by the *New York Independent* in 1910, when it was honored with a reprint by Holt.

### The Lancaterian School

New Year's Day, 1821, marked a new era in education in Petersburg, for then the first germ idea of general education arrived from over seas and found fertile soil and favoring conditions in this city. The "plan of education for poor children" reported on the memorable day and adopted by the Common Hall a month later, forms a striking landmark in the history of local education, and marks the beginning of the Anderson Seminary.

David Anderson, a native Scotland, but long a member of the Common Hall and Chamberlain of the City of Petersburg, left a bequest of some ten thousand dollars for the education of the poor children in "spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic." A special committee of three reported to the Common Hall, January first, 1821, that seventy or eighty children were entitled to this training under the will, that twenty dollars per pupil was the price of such tuition, and that eight dollars per pupil was the price of books and "stationary." Thus the bequest of six hundred dollars per annum seemed insufficient.

"But on the Lancasterian plan," the report continues, "it is understood and believed that one Master can attend an hundred children, in the branches proposed; and carry them forward as rapidly and perhaps more so, than in the ordinary way of teaching, thus making the fund equal to four times its amount in the com-

mon way. This plan has been adopted in most of our cities and large towns and high encomiums have frequently been passed upon it throughout Europe."

This Lancasterian Plan was the method of teaching evolved by Joseph Lancaster, the new light in education in the opening of the nineteenth century, the Montessori of a hundred years ago. Lancaster's efforts to give the poor the rudiments of instruction without fee had brought a thousand children to his Borough Road school in London, founded 1798, and had aroused public interest in his system. The *Edinburgh Review* called his method "a beautiful and inestimable discovery, a plan now brought very near to perfection." George III encouraged Lancaster, and in 1808 the Royal Lancasterian Institution was founded in England. But Lancaster quarreled with his trustees, set up his private school at Tooting, became bankrupt, and in 1818 emigrated to America. Here he had a warm reception, giving several courses of lectures in New York and elsewhere, and began to establish his system of schools. Thus Anderson's bequest to the poor children of Petersburg came at the very time when Lancaster's system was being taught in America by Lancaster himself.

This new system, by which Lancaster claimed that it was possible "to teach ten thousand children to read fluently in from three weeks to three months," was one of the two "monitorial" methods of instruction of that day. Bell and Lancaster were the two "rival inventors" of this "mutual" method, which really came from the East. Finally Bell's system was generally adopted in England by the Church of England, while Lancaster's found favor with the Nonconformists. The three main features of Lancaster's plan were the use of older scholars as "monitors" or assistant teachers, the use of a special system of drill and the use of simple material appliances—"a few little leaves torn out of spelling-books and pasted on boards, some slates, and a desk spread with sand on which the children wrote with their fingers." There are extant interesting pictures of the Lancasterian school-room with the monitors at regular intervals along the walls, each facing a semi-circle of young pupils, and thanks to David Anderson, such a school was founded in Petersburg in 1821.

### Anderson Seminary

The very details of the founding of Anderson Seminary, give a bright touch of local color. The six hundred dollar income of the Anderson Fund was combined



with the two hundred dollar income of the Literary Fund, total eight hundred, and the Common Hall, 1821, appointed twelve trustees, who were allowed to spend for the first year six hundred and forty dollars for house and a teacher "who will qualify himself to teach on this Lancasterian plan" and one hundred and sixty for "books, forms, lessons, and stationery for seventy scholars." The teacher, however, was to reserve for himself the privilege of taking other pupils for pay. The great success of the plan is shown by the fact that soon afterward (in 1824), four hundred pupils of the school gathered on Poplar Lawn to sing patriotic songs on the occasion of the visit of General LaFayette, and by the further fact that about a decade later the Petersburg Academy, founded in 1794, was absorbed by the Anderson Seminary, as already stated. Thus Anderson Seminary, nearly a century old, is the link connecting the local public school system of to-day with the beginnings of the movement for general education in America. It is most fitting that the one monument erected in Blandford churchyard by the "Corporation of Petersburg," is "Sacred to the Memory of David Anderson, a Benefactor and a Friend of Man."

### Schools for Boys

Two private schools for boys of the second half of the last century have an especial interest to the student of local history. On Sycamore street just above Central park is the one-story building that was the schoolhouse of Mr. George E. Christian during the Civil War. Here on fateful Ninth of June, 1864, the boys of Christian's school were preparing their French lessons, not knowing that their teacher, Prof. Staubly, lay dead on the Rives farm, two miles away, where he had aided in the brave defence that delayed General Kautz and saved the city for nearly a year.

Directly opposite the Park on the same street, at the corner of Fillmore, is the vacant lot where stood after the war the wooden building of McCabe's University School. This building was afterwards bought by the Christian church and removed to Washington street, where it stands today opposite Pine street. The University School was known throughout the land for a third of a century. Although it was established after the war, it is part of the war history of the city for the reason that its distinguished head-master was the gallant young adjutant of Pegram's Battery and later became the historian of the Battle of the Crater in his eloquent address before the Army of Northern Virginia.

### Southern College

The third school that is a part of the war record of the city is the Southern Junior College, whose buildings stand on Sycamore Street, diagonally across from Central Park. This institution is historic through the fact that it was chartered by the Confederate legislature and carried on its work of training young women during the siege of the city.

On the same memorable ninth of June 1864, the founder and president of the college, Williams T. Davis, like Prof. Staubly, was in Archer's command in the Rives farm fight in defence of the city, while three of his sons were in other commands. It was probably because of his absence that the college girls were grouped on the front piazza on this June day. At any rate, it is a fact that as Graham's battery of four guns came dashing and swaying up Sycamore Street, with the men on the caissons clinging for life as they rushed to drive back Kautz's advance up the New Road, they were cheered by the college girls with a spirit and strength that made the cheer audible above the rumble of the cannon. On went the guns, the two brass howitzers turning into the New Road and the two rifled guns going into position on the crest of the Delectable Heights in time to repel the attack.

It is said that in this attack Graham's Battery fired thirty-nine rounds without sponging.

### A Soldier's Dairy

In "Confederate War Talks," a member of Graham's Battery gives the following account of this episode: "As our battery galloped up Sycamore street, the ladies waved their handkerchiefs and the boys in the battery responded with cheers. The Southern Female College building was filled with ladies, who waved handkerchiefs while we cheered, and just here a pigeon, on its wild flight in the air, darted down towards the moving battery, seeing which several of the old veterans gently ducked their heads, thinking the bird a ball from one of enemy's guns, as we could hear the firing in the distance over the hills."

### Southern College Again

Through a long part of the siege, the work of the college was carried on daily, the hours of lecture being arranged so girls might not go to and fro during the fixed hours of bombardment. The bomb-proof cellar is still to be seen to which the resident students retired during the



shelling. The spot in the grounds is still shown where the shell fell during the siege, and the other spot where the silver was buried in anticipation of the capture of the city. Finally the danger became so great that the school was removed to Danville, where it was located when the last meeting of the Confederate cabinet was held there. Immediately after the war, the college was again established in its old home in Petersburg.

### A College Story

Many interesting stories of war times are told about the College. One of the most amusing is the account of the wedding-dinner on the occasion of the marriage of the president's eldest daughter to a Confederate Major during the siege of Petersburg. In spite of the long siege, a banquet was spread and all the guests were seated, when Anderson, the butler, was called out to answer a loud ringing of the door-bell.

Some of the gay and hungry young blades of a New Orleans Company, brothers-in-arms to the Major and friends of the family, having heard the news of the wedding had left the lines and "run the block," and came en masse to the feast. So stately old Anderson made the tragic announcement: "Marse Williams, de Wash-nun Artillery in de parlor."

### A Ninth of June Story

The same Anderson was on the lines with President Wms. T. Davis on the Ninth of June. It is not clear whether he went as the body servant that sometimes accompanied even the private soldier, or whether he was sent to bear some message or food. At any rate, as the afternoon wore on and sounds of fighting were borne to the anxious wife, she saw Anderson approaching without his master. Full of dread, she cried: "Anderson, what have you done with Mr. Davis? Why have you left him?" "Law, Miss Carrie," was the reply, "de bullets was flyin' en Marse Williams say dat warn't no place for a nigger, en he sont me home."

### An Intensive Study

An intensive study of any spot in Petersburg is sure to reveal interesting facts. As an illustration of this, the history of the grounds and buildings of Southern College may be traced.

This site was not included in the original 1748 charter of Abraham Jones, for the reason that it was in "Ravenscroft," the settlement embraced within the triangle formed to-day by Halifax, Sycamore and Shore Streets.

## The Petersburg Poorhouse

Thus it was not until the second charter of 1748 that this site became part of Petersburg, and it was later chosen as the location for the poorhouse. It was because of this fact that Tulip Lane on the east of Sycamore Street could not keep a straight course, as the town authorities would not condemn a right of way through their own poorhouse, but deflected the "Lane" to one side, forming the present College Place. This early use of this site for a poorhouse has caused many a merry jest about reversion to original use, in view of the fact that the teaching profession is an impecunious one.

### Magnate's Home and College

About a third of a century later, however, Mr. Henry D. Bird, first an engineer of construction and later president of the Petersburg Railroad, bought the property and erected on it one of the handsome homes of the city. This is now the nucleus of the Main building of Southern College.

In the fifties, the part of the property on the corner of College Place was bought by the Methodists as the site of the Petersburg Female Sollege. Surprising to relate, the building was designed and prepared in the North and shipped to Petersburg and erected as an ideal College building.

### A Gradual Growth

In 1862, Mr. Williams T. Davis, then president of Petersburg Female College, bought the Henry D. Bird House in order to establish an independent college, chartered in 1863 as the Southern Female College. In the seventies he added the lecture-room building. On his death in 1888, his son succeeded him and in the nineties he added to the original buildings. Meantime the Petersburg Female College had passed, and the property was used as private residences. Soon after nineteen hundred, however, it was purchased for use as part of Southern College, and is now the College Annex.

Thus the College site in Petersburg on Sycamore Street facing Tulip Alley was originally in "Ravenscroft" on "Walnut Lane" facing "Tulip Lane," and since that time it has held a poorhouse, a railway magnate's house, two rival schools, and the present College. Equally striking details of local history may probably be learned from any other site chosen at random in the city.



## Historic Churches

Several of the churches of Petersburg should have special mention. St. Paul's Episcopal church, the child of old Bristol Parish church, was first built in 1802 on the site of the present court-house. It was later moved to Sycamore Street, opposite Franklin, and when this church was burned in 1853, the present edifice on Union Street was built. The moving from Blandford was in the time of Parson Syme, to whom a memorial tablet should be placed in Old Blandford. Before the church of 1802 was built, Cameron and Syme preached on alternate Sundays in the Blandford church and in the Petersburg court-house, but to small congregations, as religion was then at a low ebb in this section. It was in this "new brick church," built 1802-6, that Burk delivered an oration five weeks before his death.

On Union Street, where the Roper warehouse now stands, was the most famous historic church building of Petersburg. This primacy was due not only to the fact that this church was the child of the first church of any denomination in Petersburg, the old Methodist church that stood perhaps first on Old and afterward on Market street at the junction of Friend street, but especially to the fact that here was held the first General Conference of the Methodist Church, South, after its separation from the (Northern) Methodist church. Thus this old building was the scene of the organization of the large body of Secessionists that still maintains a separate existence. At this conference, Bishop Andrews presided, and there was a dramatic moment when Bishop Soule, the general superintendent of the whole Methodist church of the country, announced his allegiance to the Southern branch of the church. The congregation of this church afterward built Washington street Methodist church, and the Union street building became a negro church until it was torn down.

The original building of Tabb street Presbyterian church is now A. P. Hill Camp hall. A new church was built directly opposite, and when this was burned, the present edifice was built. This church is historic through memorable sermons during the secession times and the building itself, though dignified and beautiful in its combination of Classic and Gothic types of architecture, drew a humorous reference from Max O'Rell on his lecture-trip to Petersburg. In "A Frenchman in America," he speaks of it as a Greek temple with a steeple, and compares it to a Roman senator with a toga and a stovepipe hat. The Second Presbyterian church on Washington

street is also historic through the fact that it was built during the Civil War, the tower of the old church on Baltimore Row on High street being used during the late years of the war as a shot tower. Grace Episcopal church, on the other hand, having moved from the brick church on Old Street to worship in the basement of the new church just before hostilities began, was not able to complete the High street building until 1870. The First Baptist church on Washington is memorable as having been built to replace the one struck by lightning and burned in 1865. The first church of the Baptists in the city is now the rear of the Builders' Supply Company building, and the second Baptist church built in the city stood at the corner of Market and High streets.

## The Public Buildings

The first courthouse stood on the site of the present clerk's office, and the old wooden building is still preserved across the river in Ettrick. The handsome courthouse of today is said to have been modeled after the designs of Sir Charles Christopher Wren. It was in the old wooden courthouse that Burk delivered his oration, still extant, on the 4th of March, 1803, to celebrate the election of Jefferson, but it was in the present courthouse that there were stirring events in Reconstruction times, when a Federal officer reversed his decision in one minute, leaving the city on the same night.

The Mechanics' Association building, succeeded by the present steel structure, has already been mentioned as Mechanics Hall, but it was historic also through the story of the origin of the Association itself. It is the one permanent result of the visit of LaFayette in 1824. The mechanics of the town had gathered to plan the erection of a triumphal arch to LaFayette, when the news came that he would arrive the next day, too soon for their purpose, but the assembled workmen united themselves into a guild that is flourishing today. The Association library and museum deserve mention as among the best antiquarian collections in Virginia. As a benevolent association, it must yield the palm for early historic birth to the Blandford Lodge of Masons, established in 1757 as the third lodge in America.

Interesting sidelights of history are given in the records of the Mechanics' Association. The election of three ministers as honorary members of the Association in 1826 marks the religious revival. These were Rev. Andrew Syme of the Episcopal church, Rev. Benj. H. Rice of



the Presbyterian church, and Rev. Minton Thrift of the Methodist church, who wrote in 1845 an incomplete history of the city. His estate on Sycamore Street, between Franklin and Washington, was known as Thrift's Garden. Two other honorary members of the Association should be mentioned—John Niblo, who was elected in 1828, the year in which Niblo's Hotel was built, and Elihu Burritt, the "Learned Blacksmith," who was thus honored in 1843, perhaps after lecturing here.

The Exchange building on Bank street represents a futile effort made in 1839 to establish a regular produce exchange here. This enterprise languished with a slight flurry of success in 1858, until it was finally suspended before the war. During the war, this was the home of the Bank of the City of Petersburg, which ended with the war. The only bank that lived through the troublous time was the Petersburg Savings and Insurance Company.

Two other banks on this street occupied respectively the site of the present Academy building and the same building now occupied by Cuthbert Bros. The wide space on the sidewalk in front of this was left for the guard house that was before the bank in those days. On Bank street was also the office of Dr. Joseph E. Cox, who perished in the great snow of 1857, hence called Cox's Snow. Mention has already been made of the Library Association building on Bollingbrook street, which was burned in 1878 and afterward rebuilt. This association was chartered in 1853, and its library was a very valuable one.

### Story of the Streets

The history of Petersburg is written in a general way in the names of its streets, although at first sight these names seem a hopeless jumble of nature, biography, mythology, and the Bible. There are, of course, the usual proprietary names of Bolling, Jones, Gill, Tabb and Shore. In regular order of place and time, however, four marked divisions of streets may be traced, the practical, the patriotic, the classic, and the Biblical.

The early settlers, busy with practical affairs, gave to the streets names that were simple indicants, such as High and Low, River and Market, Sycamore and Oak. As the town spread southward from the river at the time of the revolution and afterward, a furore of patriotism seems to have seized the inhabitants, and thus the next range of streets includes Henry and Franklin, Washington and LaFayette, Adams and Jefferson, Wythe

and Marshall, Harrison and Fillmore, Clinton and Webster, with a general flourish in Liberty street. Then as the tide of patriotic feeling abated in the wrangle of parties and sections, probably near the middle of the last century, the list of national names came to an abrupt close.

However, as the tide of population still spread southward toward that part of the city called by LaFayette "The Delectable Heights," new names had to be found, and probably some alumnus of the old Petersburg Academy, founded in 1794, or some new-fledged graduate of the University of Virginia, founded in 1825, showed his classical knowledge by suggesting to the Petersburg proprietors or powers the names of mythology. Thus the third range of streets bears such names as Mars and Apollo, Mercury and Cupid, and other heathen gods. Probably the religious revival put an end to this honoring of the heathern divinities, as the fourth range of streets, on the very Heights, has entirely orthodox names in St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John.

Halifax street was the road leading out to Halifax, North Carolina, but for one square it retains its old name of Oak street. One of the quaintest streets in the city has three names in a quarter-mile stretch. This was Back street in the early days, but it was later given the aristocratic English name of Lombard, as fashion moved over from Blandford. After crossing Sycamore street, however, it degenerates into business as Bank, and rises into residential sections as High. As Blandford, once a rival but now a suburb, had preempted the name of Main street, the city named its main thoroughfare Sycamore street from the two sycamores that once stood at the junction with Old street. This street was formerly Sycamore only as far up as Oak street, where its name changed to Walnut, a name fortunately preserved in Walnut Hill across the new viaduct at the head of Sycamore street. In like manner, Phoenix street today preserves the name of Old Phoenix Hall.

This march of Sycamore Street southward from the River to the Heights makes an interesting study in old records. At first the name seems to have a mere foothold from the Old Market to the foot of the present street, all Sycamore being then known as Walnut Lane. Just as the westward march of the English drove back the Indians, however, so the advance of Sycamore Street pushed the name of Walnut further and further South. In its second phase, Sycamore Street extended only as far as Back (or Lombard)



Street, later it advanced to Powell's Tavern, then it extended up to Weeks's Tavern, and finally it reached The Heights. Thus Sycamore Street, after crawling two squares in its infancy, took a boyish hop to Tabb Street, a youthful skip to Oak Street, and a full man's jump to The Heights.

The Blandford streets also deserve mention. Here too are found, of course, a few proprietary names, such as Burch, Mingea, Poythress, and Taylor, but the two streets parallel with Main are Church street and Little Church street. It is an amusing thought that although these devout names were given, it was necessary to hold a lottery to help pay for the building of the old Blandford church. Main street, like Duke of Gloucester street in Williamsburg, was laid out in princely style. It was ninety feet wide, and at the Courthouse Square it broadened out one hundred feet on each side, making a generous square. There were hospitable homes along these generous streets, the old Haxall House marking perhaps the limit of the fashionable residence section before the exodus to Petersburg about 1800.

## PART IV—CIVIL WAR HISTORY

### The Battlefields

A quarter of a mile beyond Blandford is the Crater, the most interesting point in the line of intrenchment thirty-five miles in length which held the hopes of the Confederacy in 1864-65. Petersburg's great war fame rests upon the two facts that here occurred the longest and bloodiest seige in American history and that here occurred the most spectacular single event of the Civil war, the explosion of the Burnside mine. For ten months the two armies of the Civil War, the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac, were here pitted in heroic combat. The line of intrenchment is still practically intact through a great part of its length, and at the Crater itself a well-preserved battlefield, scarred and monumented, is spread out like a map.

### The Monuments

Thus the Crater battlefield offers wonderful opportunities for the study of an actual battle of the Civil War. The fortifications stand untouched and the Crater itself remains just as it was left when the Federal dead were transferred from it to the National cemetery five miles distant. The lines of the two armies were so close together that a stone

might be tossed from one into the other. The line of the excavation of the Burnside Pennsylvania miners may still be traced from the Federal lines to the point of explosion under the Elliott Salient. The open fields and the rolling and wooded country still show the line of the covered way by which the Confederate troops advanced to recapture the lines after the explosion. On the Griffith farm itself, where the Crater is located there is a wonderfully interesting museum of the war relics. Along the road are markers placed by the A. P. Hill Camp, of Confederate Veterans, and the fields are dotted with granite monuments and markers erected by the Northern Posts. Especially noticeable are the stately monuments of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, which were unveiled with great ceremony by the governors and veterans of those States.

### Around the Lines

In the immediate vicinity of the Crater lie numerous battle-fields, and a drive "around the lines" is both interesting and instructive. Two features of interest are a well-preserved "bomb-proof" that may still be entered, and the underground passage on the Davis farm not far from the two famous forts near the Crater, Fort Mahone (Fort Hell) and Fort Sedgwick (Fort Damnation).

Just across the Jerusalem Plank Road from this underground passage is the modest marker erected to commemorate the citizen-soldiers' fight of the Ninth of June, 1864.

### The Four Lines

Roughly speaking, there were four lines of fortifications around Petersburg in the Civil War, two Confederate and two Federal. The first Confederate line was built by Captain Dimmock, and this Dimmock line extends from the river at Skipwith and Puddledock all around the city back to the river at the Locks, the batteries being numbered from one to sixty-two. When the Federals took Battery Number Five, General Beauregard built the second and inner line of Confederate fortifications. The Federal line in front of the city thus embraced part of the Dimmock line, but it was extended to the Confederate right until both lines reached for miles to Hatcher's Run. This Federal line was thus the third circumvallation. After the Cattle Raid, however, when Rooney Lee made his raid to the rear and carried off thousands of cattle, General Grant built a fourth line, this time a reverse line fac-



ing to the rear so as to prevent an attack from that quarter. This reverse line joined the Main line of fortifications about Fort Fisher, and between them ran Grant's military railroad. A sketch of the entrenched lines shows between thirty and forty forts on these lines of Grant's army south of the Appomattox.

### Three Points of Interest

As the Crater and the monuments form a focus of interest on the east of the city, so there are three points of special interest on the west, showing the gradual swing of the battle line to the south and west until Lee's lines of supplies were cut.

The first of these is Rohoic Dam, where the pent waters of a stream were used to strengthen two miles of the worn Confederate line. This same device had already been used on a smaller scale in the Gracie Dam on the east of the city. The second and more famous spot is Fort Gregg, near the Central Hospital, the scene of one of the most gallant defences in all history. There were only two hundred and fifty Confederates in Fort Gregg, but when it fell at seven o'clock on the fateful morning of April the second, 1865, over five hundred of the Federals had fallen before it, and only thirty defenders were left. The third and most sacred spot is shown by a marker on the Dinwiddie road about three miles from the city, where General A. P. Hill was killed while riding in front of his lines. In memory of this great soldier, who gave his life for the city, the local camp of Confederate Veterans is called the A. P. Hill Camp.

### Summary of The Siege

Petersburg was the cardinal point of the Civil War in its last year. All the great war moves hinged here. Even the distant military movements of this crucial period "pivoted" on the Cockade City. The wide sweep of the subsidiary operations is most impressive. Early's raid on Washington and Sheridan's raid in the valley were both undertaken with reference to Petersburg and ended at Petersburg. Even Sherman's march to the sea became finally an advance on Petersburg, and Johnson's fight at Goldsboro was to protect Petersburg.

### The Varied Strategy

But it is the varied strategy of the siege itself that makes Petersburg unique in our war annals. Surprise attacks, sustained assaults, pitched battles, feints

and diversions, an underground explosion and an artificial lake, trench and sap—every artifice of war was employed. The Petersburg terrain was the arena of the greatest "hammer and rapier" duel in history. Grant's sledge-hammer blow dented, but did not crush the defense, and Lee's rapier thrusts could reach no vital part of his opponent's line. Grant had to "move by the left," and Lee's line "stretched so long as to break." Surely the central area of this historic combat should be preserved intact. Not Waterloo nor Gettysburg is more sacred ground.

### The Thirteen Battles

Of the thirteen battles outside the breastworks here may be mentioned in the order of time Rives's Salient, Battery Number Five, Avery's Farm, Weldon Railroad, The Crater, Fort Wadsworth, Fort Steadman, Fort Mahone, Fort Gregg, and Fort Fisher. As a study of masterly attack and defense, neither Yorktown nor Vicksburg may be compared to Petersburg. It is perhaps only in Wellington's Peninsular Campaign that such bravery and persistence in attack and such heroic valor and devotion in defense may be found. And the impression that remains with the visitor fifty years after the battles were fought is not one of regret or apology, but rather one of pride that here, where their fathers achieved their independence, two armies, composed of the sons of the same indomitable race, held the world in awe and Fate itself in suspense with their Titanic struggle.

### Civil War Hospitals

There were seven large hospitals in Petersburg during the last year of the war. The best equipped was the Confederate Hospital on Washington at the corner of Jones, where a large tobacco factory was utilized for this purpose. The Fair Grounds Hospital was in West End Park and McIlwaine's Grove, and there was also a hospital established later in Poplar Lawn, or Central Park.

Four other hospitals were established in factories or warehouses; the North Carolina in Cameron's factory, the Virginia in Watson's and McGill's factory, the South Carolina in Maclin's factory, and the Ladies' Hospital on Bollingbrook and Second Streets. These four hospitals had to be abandoned after



the first month of the siege on account of the shelling, and the regular work of caring for the sick and wounded fell to the Confederate and Fair Grounds hospitals, while Poplar Lawn was used on occasions. Dr. John Herbert Claiborne was in charge of all these military hospitals. He tells how he had authority to draw requisitions "for cotton yarn and snuff," when Confederate money would not buy the necessary supplies for the sick and wounded soldiers.

### **A Vivid Picture**

Dr. Claiborne also tells of the day of the evacuation, the second of April, when the lines were broken on the Dinwiddie Plank Road and the fierce fighting was going on at Fort Gregg. The Federals had already advanced near the Whitworth House, now the Central Hospital, and random bullets were falling in the Fair Grounds hospital. He gives a vivid picture of the convalescents leaving the danger zone and pictures the surgeons and attaches "resorting to leeward of the large trees" for protection.

Even the New Market building was used as a "half-way hospital" for cases needing prompt treatment, and citizens still tell of the grisly sight of "piles of arms and legs" made by the surgeons. One citizen, a Civil War youngster, tells how an amputated arm, thrown carelessly aside by the surgeon, struck him and the hand grasped his leg by reflex action, holding fast for a full square during his wild flight.

Other temporary hospitals were doubtless established from time to time. On the day of the Crater fight, Mahone's field hospital was established on the New Road, where it crosses Lieutenant Run. Mr. Putnam Stith and Mr. Richard B. Davis, a brother of the writer, both of whom were wounded at the Crater, give amusing stories of the day.

### **Three Hospital Stories**

Mr. Davis says that at this New Road bridge, General Mahone gave orders in about these words: "Boys, leave everything behind but your shirts and muskets, for we are going to fight like h—l today." This account is in strong contrast to the language of Judge D. M. Bernard, another participant. He says: "Here we were ordered to doff our knap-

sacks, et cetera, and get ready for action." This account is the more polite, but the verbatim report of Mr. Davis is more vivid.

Mr. Stith tells how he sat down to rest behind a tree on Hannon's Hill, as he was returning wounded to this field hospital, and heard a groan from behind another tree, where "Dick" Davis was resting. Together they made their way to the ambulance and were sent to the Brigade hospital at McIlwaine's Grove, where Dr. James W. Claiborne was in charge. "In less than half an hour after we got there," says he, "Professor W. T. Davis, Dick's father, arrived with a bottle of home-made wine in each hand—that wine saved two lives."

Another Crater incident, told by Judge D. M. Bernard, may be told here. He says that on that afternoon he saw "the happiest man I had ever seen before or have ever seen since." His hair, face, beard, clothes were matted with red mud, but "his eyes were happy." He had been buried and stunned by the Crater explosion, and when he came to himself he thought he was in his grave. After hours of frantic work, he dug his way out, "and he was happy."

### **Origin of Memorial Day**

The Petersburg Memorial Association, formed by the ladies of Petersburg in 1866, was the first Memorial Association in America, and from it sprang the movement establishing the National Memorial Day. Mrs. John A. Logan, of Illinois, visited Petersburg some years after the war and learned of the memorial exercises of the 9th of June. She interested her husband, General John A. Logan, a member of Congress, and he in turn interested the Grand Army of the Republic and Congress itself in the movement that established May 30th as National Decoration Day.

### **Civil War Historians**

Several Petersburg writers have done valuable work in Civil War history, especially as related to Petersburg.

Special mention is made elsewhere of Mr. Anthony Keiley's brilliant little book, "In Vinculis," and of the eloquent address of Captain W.



Gordon McCabe on the Battle of the Crater.

First after these should be named Mr. George S. Bernard, an eminent lawyer and a Confederate veteran. He collected and edited a valuable series of war reminiscences by members of the A. P. Hill Camp of Petersburg. These papers were published in 1892 under the modest title, "War Talks of Confederate Veterans," and the book is a monument to his ability and industry, as well as a striking exhibit of the heroism and culture of these Petersburg veterans. In any history of Petersburg the "War Talks" should have more than passing notice.

### **"Confederate War Talks"**

Mr. George S. Bernard contributed the paper on the "Maryland Campaign of 1862," which followed Dr. J. M. Pilcher's account of the "Early Days of the War." Ex-Governor William E. Cameron wrote of "Chancellorsville" and Mr. Simon Steward told of his "Escape From Point Lookout." Mr. John R. Turner told the part taken by Mahone's Brigade in the "Battle of the Wilderness."

Colonel Fletcher H. Archer, a veteran of the Mexican War and colonel in command of the Petersburg militia on the 9th of June, 1864, contributed a strong paper on "The Defense of Petersburg," while Mr. George S. Bernard gave a valuable and full treatment of the "Battle of the Crater."

Dr. John Herbert Claiborne, an eminent physician and the author of "Seventy-five Years in Old Virginia," gave a thrilling account of the Last Days of Lee and his Paladins, while Mr. Freeman W. Jones gave a modest account of his part in "A Daring Expedition" under Captain Read.

Judge J. M. Mullen contributed the final formal paper in an interesting account of the Last Days of Johnston's Army. There are also personal experiences by Mr. R. B. Davis, Judge D. M. Bernard, Mr. Putnam Smith, Captain W. E. Hinton, Mr. J. W. Young, Mr. Wm. Cameron, Hon. C. F. Collier, Mr. R. A. Martin, Mrs. David Challender, Miss Lossie Hill, Miss Virginia Davidson, Mrs. Fanny Waddell, Mr. Hugh R. Smith, Mr. John R. Turner, Mr. W. E. Smith, Prof. R. W. Jones, Mr. W. E. Whitehorne, Mr. E. Myers, Mr. H. V. L. Bird, Judge D. A.

Hinton, Capt. L. L. Marks, Col. E. M. Field, Maj. W. A. Shepard, Mr. W. P. Hoy, Mr. J. T. Barham, Capt. J. R. Patterson, Mr. J. E. Spotswood, Col. J. P. Minetree, Mr. J. E. Rockwell and others.

### **The Petersburg Historians**

Three histories of Petersburg have been written, and each represents a serious effort to tell worthily the chronicles of the noble city.

Rev. Minton Thrift seems to have been the first to attempt the task, and his incomplete history, written in 1845, is now the property of Mrs. Alexander. The style of the work is heavy, but it shows careful study and research.

In 1878, Rev. E. S. Gregory published his "Sketch of the History of Petersburg." This work is written in easy and flowing style and is well worthy of the high esteem in which it is held. Mr. Gregory collected his facts with care and presented them in attractive form.

### **Pollock's Guide**

The most comprehensive of these histories, however, is the two hundred and fifty-page "Guide to Petersburg" of Mr. Edward Pollock, an Englishman, published in 1884. The book is both "historical and industrial," less than one hundred pages being devoted to the history of the city, and the remainder to sketches of the city's industries and organizations and to advertisements. One feature of the book that adds to its interest and value is the author's plan of giving a sketch of his advertisers, and many of the prominent business men of a third of a century ago are thus described.

## **PART V—STORY OF THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG**

### **The Six Accounts**

As already mentioned, six residents of Petersburg have told the story of the siege and defense of the city. These have done it so well as to discourage any further attempt. Colonel F. H. Archer's paper in the "War Talks" is the most graphic; Captain W. G. McCabe's paper in the Southern Historical Papers is the most complete; Mr. G. S. Bernard's in the "War Talks" is the most careful, and Mr. Anthony Keiley's in "In Vinculis" is



the most brilliant. The outlines given by Mr. E. S. Gregory in his Sketch and by Mr. Edward Pollock in his Guide are compilations rather than independent accounts.

### **"Caviare to the General"**

All these excellent accounts, however, leave something to be desired. They are either too technical or too diffuse, too deep or too long, for the average reader. Thus they are "caviare to the general," and few of our people read these admirable essays today.

### **The Petersburg Iliad**

It ought to be possible, however, to tell this modern Iliad in brief and simple style, and such a story ought to interest even the children of the city and thus preserve the memory of the deeds of the fathers for the coming years. The military terms, the involved strategy, the complicated movements, the details of battles, must here be avoided as carefully as the rhetorical outburst or the fine language. Only the general plan and outline and the specific names and dates need be given. The "terrain" must become simply "the lay of the land," the "lunette" must be simply an open earthwork, the "salient" merely a fort. In fact, any child may learn the plan of the siege by grasping the two words, front and flank, and by bending a whiplash till it meets the handle of the whip.

### **The Seventeen Companies**

Until the last twelve-month of the Civil War, Petersburg was not threatened, although there was a flurry in July, 1863, caused by the rumor that a Federal gunboat was coming up the river. During all this time of quiet, however, this city was sending her men to the Confederate armies, and it is an actual fact that out of a total white population of less than ten thousand Petersburg furnished seventeen companies to the Confederate service. These seventeen companies are mentioned by name in the sketches of Gregory and of Pollock.

### **The First Menace**

The 5th of May, 1864, brought the first real menace of war to Petersburg. General Butler's army of

thirty thousand had begun a movement against Petersburg and Richmond. His troops landed at City Point and his cavalry advanced from Suffolk. General Pickett was in charge of the troops in Petersburg. Six months before he had heard rumors of this intended advance and urged the need of troops and fortifications at Petersburg, but the city was still unprepared for attack. However, General Pickett with some six hundred regulars and about the same number of militia made ready to defend the city on this 5th of May, 1864. Fortunately Butler did not attack that day, and on the next day Haygood's brigade arrived and checked Butler's advance at Port Walthall. On the 7th day of May, Wise's Brigade arrived and occupied the lines toward City Point.

### **The Month's Respite**

This arrival of Wise's Brigade gave the city a needed defense. Proper lines of defense were prepared and the local militia was soon increased to a thousand. The tide of fighting, however, turned toward the north side of the Appomattox, and most of the regulars and of the militia were withdrawn from the Petersburg lines, only a few companies being left to guard the trenches here. General Henry A. Wise was in command of Petersburg and the lines around it. In this connection, the following personal letter from his son, the late John S. Wise, treasured by the writer of this article, will prove interesting:

#### **John S. Wise's**

"Tell Mrs. Davis that I say nobody can praise Petersburg too highly. It was the most devoted, unselfish, hospitable place on earth. But the man who above all others ought to be the cherished hero of Petersburg is Henry A. Wise."

"Arriving with his brigade from Charleston in May, 1864, he reached there in time to meet and repel the first Federal advance, and for nearly a month, solitary and alone, his brigade, only supported by home guards, whipped off and held in check the Federals—2,200 men successfully opposed 22,000 men until General Lee could succor them, and by that time General Wise had lost nine out of twelve of his field officers and nearly half of his brigade."



"Nobody except Mahone at the Crater ever fought for Petersburg as did General Wise, and when they build another statue to those who loved Petersburg best and fought hardest for her, it ought to be to my old bald-eagle daddy."

### **The 9th of June, 1864**

If Butler's attack, foiled by General Wise, was the prologue to the city's war drama, there was yet a grim curtain-raiser of tragedy before the real action begun. This was Kautz's raid on the 9th of June, when the local force of one hundred and twenty-five men had to bear the brunt of the attack of the thirteen hundred Federal regulars. This heroic resistance saved the city by holding the enemy until help came, but the success was won at heavy cost. It is in memory of these devoted sons that Petersburg annually keeps her Memorial Day on the 9th of June.

### **The General Situation**

Grant's overland campaign, begun on the 3d of May, 1864, had failed. After the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor, he was still unable to drive Lee from the fortifications of Richmond. Cold Harbor was fought on the 3d of June, and now Grant determined to move on Petersburg and thus attack Richmond from the south. The movement to the south was begun at once, and by the 16th of June all Grant's army was south of the James River. Thus the Federal Army of the Potomac was being launched against Petersburg.

### **Kautz's Raid**

In the meantime, before Grant's forces reached Petersburg or were known to be about to attack it, part of General Butler's force made the 9th of June attack, known as Kautz's Raid. The Federal forces consisted of an infantry force of five or six thousand men under General Gilmore that moved against the Confederate lines near the river, and a cavalry force of thirteen hundred men with four guns that attempted to capture the city by a surprise attack from the Jerusalem Plank Road.

The infantry attack under Gilmore was not seriously pressed, as he did not assault the lines in front

of him, reporting them as too strong. Kautz's cavalry, however, swept around without resistance. Reaching the plank road, they advanced to capture the city. All went well until they reached the Rives farm.

### **The Petersburg Militia**

As already explained, the regulars and most of the militia had been withdrawn from Petersburg for service elsewhere. The small force left in the trenches had spent thirty days in drilling, guard duty and camp life. They had no idea of the impending attack. When the news of the danger came through a note from Colonel Harrison, the long roll was ordered, and the old men and boys and absentees of the militia were hurriedly summoned from Petersburg. The six companies of militia that arrived in time to bear the brunt of Kautz's attack had a total strength of one hundred and twenty-five men. They had to face a force ten times their number.

### **The Rives Farm Fight**

The fight began at noon on the 9th of June on the Jerusalem Plank Road, a mile and a half from Petersburg. Our men occupied an open earth-work, with low breastworks running out on either side. The first cavalry charge was driven back, and the one gun of Sturdivant's battery that had been hurried up with six men opened on the enemy. The little handful could hope for no help. On one side was a gap of a mile to the next support, and on the other a gap of four miles to the river. The fate of Petersburg depended on their stubborn resistance, as they knew. What they did not know was that the fate of Richmond and of Lee's army depended on them. It was a Thermopylae of the Civil War.

### **Two Hours of Heroism**

The first charge of Kautz's cavalry was repulsed by the fire of Archer's men. Kautz then dismounted two regiments of his cavalry and began to attack from left and right. Our men twice repulsed the attacks and were commanded to fall back only after a gap in their lines had been penetrated and they had been flanked on both sides. "We fought them," says Anthony



Keiley, "till we were so surrounded that two men nearest to me were shot in the back while facing the line of original approach; till our camp in rear of the works was full of the foe; till the noblest blood of our city stained the breastworks." Then at last they retreated, with a loss of sixty-five out of one hundred and twenty-five—more than half. In his report, General Colston says: "They stood to the breastworks like veterans and did not fall back until ordered to do so, when they were surrounded on three sides and almost entirely cut off. Had they retreated five or ten minutes sooner, the city would have been in the enemy's hands."

### **The City Saved**

Thus it was the stubborn last half-hour of this fight that saved Petersburg. Kautz's forces then advanced in two divisions. The main division turned up the New Road to Petersburg, the other proceeded toward Blandford. Sturdivant's battery checked the advance to Blandford, and Graham's battery reached the Heights just in time to check the New Road advance at the foot of Waterworks Hill until Dearing's cavalry arrived and drove the enemy back.

In his report, General Wise says of the Petersburg militiamen: "If Sturdivant's battery lost one gun, a better one was captured and another disabled—and if they lost half a mile of ground, they gained a half hour of time and saved their beloved city."

### **Grant's Surprise Attack**

As Butler made his surprise attack on the 9th of June, so General Grant himself planned the second surprise attack on the 15th of June. This time the salvation of the city was due to Grant's secretiveness and to two accidents—a short pontoon bridge and an incorrect map.

General Lee did not learn of Grant's move to the south until the 13th of June. Even then he did not know Grant's plan against Petersburg, but expected a direct advance on Richmond by the river routes. Hence Petersburg was still weakly garrisoned and fortified, and, as Swinton says, "was the open prize of the first captor."

### **"Saved by Accidents"**

The Federal troops under Smith crossed the Appomattox at Point of Rocks on the night of June 14th and advanced against Petersburg. Many more troops would have joined in the attack, but the main Federal forces had lost a day by waiting for a longer pontoon bridge. Hancock's Corps, however, had been ferried across in transports, and they would have arrived in time to join Smith and gain the city if Hancock had not been misled by an incorrect map. Even in spite of this, Hancock would have arrived in time had he known Petersburg was his objective, but Grant had not communicated the plan to him. Hence he arrived only after Smith had made his attack on the 15th. He then offered to join Smith in a concerted attack. As the hour was late, however, Smith contented himself with holding the part of the Confederate lines already captured, and thus gave Lee time to pour reinforcements into Petersburg during the night.

### **The Period of Assaults**

Swinton devotes a chapter to the two weeks following the surprise attack of the 15th of June, calling this the "period of assaults." They were two weeks of exhausting effort on both sides. In the first four days of assault, from Wednesday to Saturday, the Federals lost more than ten thousand men. It was three days later, on the 21st of June, that Grant began his attempt to extend his left and cut Lee's communications. This brought on the action of the 22d of June and the first battle of Reams's Station. In both of these actions the Union advance was sharply checked, but though driven back from the Weldon Railroad, the Union forces were firmly established across the Jerusalem Plank Road.

### **The July Situation**

By the 1st of July both armies were entrenched before Petersburg. Grant's base was City Point, with Butler at Bermuda Hundred and Foster at Deep Bottom, ten miles south of Richmond. Grant's lines before Petersburg extended from the river on the east toward the Weldon Railroad on the south. Along this whole line Lee's army faced the Union host, protecting the Rich-



mond and Petersburg Railroad from attack on the north of the Appomattox, enveloping Petersburg on the east and south, and stretching westward beyond the flanks of the Union Army. Thus the siege of Petersburg was not really a siege or blockade, as its lines of communications were open. It was rather a partial investment or "watchful waiting," as in the siege of Sebastopol.

The whole month of July was filled with the work of entrenchment. Both of the armies "dug themselves in" and by the close of the month the systems of earthworks covered the front. It was now open to Grant either to try a direct assault or to attack by the flank. He chose first a direct assault on Burnside's front, through the exploding of a mine.

### **The Crater—July 30th.**

This Federal attack on the 30th of July, called by the Confederates the Crater Battle and by Swinton the Mine Fiasco, resulted in a Union defeat and greatly cheered the Southern army.

Burnside's Pennsylvania miners had dug a mine under an advanced fort of the Southern line, about half a mile from Blandford Cemetery, called the Elliott Salient. The plan was to make an opening for the Union forces by the explosion of this mine and to advance through this breach into Petersburg. Five of the eight divisions of the Confederate army had been drawn away from Petersburg by a movement of the Union armies in the direction of Richmond, so that on the morning of July 30th General Lee had only thirteen thousand men to defend the city, while Grant had sixty thousand massed for the attack.

The mine was to be exploded at half past four in the morning. At first it failed to explode, but Lieutenant Douty and Sergeant Rees volunteered to relight the fuse, and the mine exploded at a quarter to five, destroying the "Elliott Salient" and opening the way to Petersburg.

### **The Way Open**

Then began the Federal advance, but as soon as the attacking column advanced beyond the Crater it was met by the fire of Confederate batteries from left and right and the Federal troops sought refuge in the Crater, although a prompt advance

would have carried Cemetery Ridge and won the city. As other troops were thrown in they huddled into the Crater or sought cover behind the adjacent breastworks. This caused great confusion. A division of negro troops made an advance toward the crest, but were driven back and retired through the troops in the Crater back to their original lines. During all this time the way to Petersburg was open, and only the fires of the batteries to right and left kept back the advance. There were literally no troops between the Crater and Petersburg.

### **Mahone's Brigade**

When the mine exploded, Mahone's brigade was west of the Willcox farm, some two miles distant. General Mahone received orders to send two of his brigades a little after 6 o'clock, when the Crater had been in the enemy's possession for more than an hour. The men of Mahone's Virginia brigade and Wright's Georgia brigade dropped back from the lines and marched through the ravines and up the covered way, forming for the attack in a ravine about two hundred yards northwest of the Crater. General Mahone himself directed the attack and the advance was made by the Virginia brigade under General Weisiger. This splendid charge recaptured the lines to the north of the Crater about 9 o'clock. An hour later Wright's brigade advanced from the same ravine against the Federals south of the Crater, but the attempt failed and they took shelter with the Virginians in the works already recaptured. Wright's brigade made another unsuccessful attempt against the works about 11 o'clock, and it was not until after 1 o'clock that Saunders's Alabama brigade charged and captured the Crater itself. The Federal loss was over five thousand men, and Grant justly called the Crater fight "a miserable affair" for the Federal troops.

### **The July and August Diversions**

Early in July, before the Crater Battle, Lee had tried to weaken the Union forces before the city by the diversion of Early's Raid. He hoped that Early's dash down the Valley on Washington would cause Grant to send several of his army corps to



defend it. Early got within a few miles of Washington, but had to retreat, and Grant sent only his Sixth Corps to aid in the defense of the capital.

After the Crater Battle, Grant in turn tried a diversion. Early in August he sent Sheridan on his raid down the Valley of Virginia to weaken Lee's forces and to cut off his provisions. This raid was successful, but Early's men, driven out of the Valley, joined Lee's forces at Petersburg.

### **The Two Railroads**

Thus there was a stalemate before the lines of Petersburg. Grant found that the surprise attack had failed, the sustained assaults had failed, the special attack had failed, the diversion plan had failed. Great soldier as he was, he knew that a master of strategy confronted him, and he wisely chose the process of attrition and of gradual advance on the Confederate lines of supplies.

Lee's army before Petersburg was supplied by two railroads, the Weldon Railroad (now the Atlantic Coast Line) and the Southside Railroad (now the Norfolk and Western). Grant now began hammering on these two lines of supply.

### **Weldon Railroad Lost**

Although Lee had anticipated this move and although the battles were hotly contested and marked by brilliant fighting, Grant had the Weldon Railroad by the end of August. There were four fierce battles for this prize, from the 18th of August to the second battle of Reams's Station on the 25th of August, when the Confederates won a brilliant victory. The Union armies had the railroad, however, at a price of seven thousand men, thus cutting off Lee's direct supplies from the South. But Lee still had his main line of supplies by the Southside Railroad with his base at Burkeville.

### **Hatcher's Run**

Grant continued to "extend his left," and October was ushered in with the "Battles of the Jones House." Then followed almost a month of minor fights, until Grant's final effort to capture the Southside Railroad before the coming of winter. This was the Battle of Hatch-

er's Run, one of the main engagements in Grant's turning movement. His plan was to turn Lee's extreme right and gain the railroad. Three corps of the Army of the Potomac took part, only enough men being left behind to hold the Petersburg lines. The attempt failed, after very heavy fighting, and Grant settled down to extend his line of fortifications to Hatcher's Run.

### **Two Winter Efforts**

In December the Union forces destroyed the Weldon Railroad nearly to the North Carolina line, but there was no further serious attempt against Lee's right and the Southside Railroad until early in February. This new attempt was defeated by the Confederates, and the armies settled down in winter quarters.

### **The Spring Situation**

With the opening of the spring campaign, the defense of Petersburg becomes even more important. It is now the objective not only of the Army of the Potomac, but also of Sherman and his hosts marching north from Savannah. It is a wonderful play of "team work" in war. In North Carolina Sherman was fighting Johnston in order to reach and join Grant at Petersburg, while Grant was remaining inactive at Petersburg, lest Lee should leave Petersburg to make a junction with Johnston elsewhere. Sheridan with his forces from the Valley was also hastening to Petersburg, and thus all the Northern forces were converging on this devoted city. Sheridan reached Petersburg with his troops on March 26th, and Sherman himself arrived a few days later, leaving his army at Goldsboro, N. C.

### **The Battle of Fort Steadman**

Lee had now resolved to leave Petersburg and Richmond and try to unite with Johnston on the Danville line. Rations were accumulated at Amelia C. H. In order to open the way to Burkeville he struck toward City Point on March 25th. Thus the attack on Fort Steadman was Lee's attempt to open the way for a retreat by the Cox Road. By striking this blow at the fort just at Petersburg he hoped to cause Grant to draw in his troops from his left flank. "The attack was to be made by two



divisions under Gordon with all the troops available to support it." Gordon's brilliant attack was successful, but from lack of support it did not bring the result hoped for. It was the last serious initiative on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia before Petersburg, for now it was Grant's turn to attack.

### **The Battle of Five Forks**

Grant's final successful attempt in his turning movement was the Battle of Five Forks. The Southside Railroad and Cox's Road, the supply line and the retreat line of Lee's army, were again his objective. But now the Confederate forces, reduced in numbers and spread over a length of line almost impossible to hold, had to meet the superior numbers of Grant increased by the soldiers of Sheridan. Worst of all, Lee had to meet the massed attack of the Union armies without recalling Longstreet's two divisions guarding Richmond or Mahone's division of Hill's corps before Bermuda Hundred, for he did not know that Grant had withdrawn three of his four divisions before Richmond for the attempt on the Petersburg lines.

### **"Aggressive to the Last"**

But Lee was "Aggressive to the Last," as Swinton says. Taking all the troops he dared from the Petersburg lines and leaving only some six thousand men to guard the entrenchments, he hurried with some fifteen thousand men to meet the attack on his right.

### **The First of April, 1865**

The armies faced each other at Hatcher's Run, but the heavy rains of the 30th of March made Grant unwilling to open operations. Taking the initiative, Lee attacked the Union lines fiercely. This final important battle of the Confederate army was stubbornly contested and at times seemed to give promise of success, but it ended in Lee's defeat, with heavy losses on both sides. The Southside Road and Cox's Road were both in Grant's hands, and Lee now held only a half-moon of trenches and forts encircling Petersburg to the Appomattox River on each side.

### **Fort Gregg**

One of the most gallant defenses

of history was that of Fort Gregg, near the Central Hospital. As the Union forces advanced from Five Forks and Dinwiddie Court House and reached the lines just around Petersburg, a Union division attempted to break through to the city. There were only two hundred and fifty men to defend Fort Gregg, but before it fell at 7 o'clock on the morning of April 2d over five hundred of the enemy had fallen and only thirty defenders were left. And the inner line around the city still held firm.

### **Death of A. P. Hill**

About 10 o'clock on April 2d Longstreet at last arrived from Richmond with several brigades, and soon afterward General A. P. Hill struck the last blow for the Army of Northern Virginia in the siege. His attack on the Ninth Corps was so successful that the Union garrison of City Point had to be ordered to its support. But General A. P. Hill was killed while riding in front of his lines. The spot where he fell, a few miles from the city, has a marker placed by the Petersburg Sons of Veterans, and the local organization of Confederate Veterans is the "A. P. Hill Camp," in memory of the great leader that gave his life for the city.

### **Evacuation and Retreat**

Lee still held his cordon around Petersburg, but the lack of supplies made retreat inevitable. The only line of retreat open was up the north bank of the Appomattox. With wonderful skill, on the night of April 2d, he withdrew his forces from Petersburg, from Bermuda Hundred, and from Richmond, and brought them together at Chesterfield Court House. At dawn Lee's army was sixteen miles from Petersburg.

Lee's forces retreated from Petersburg Sunday night, April 2d, over four bridges—the Pocahontas Bridge, the Railroad Bridge, the Pontoon Bridge, and Campbell's Bridge. The city was not taken by assault, as is asserted in many school histories. Swinton tells the true story: "When in the gray dawn of Monday, April 3d, the skirmishers advanced from the lines before Petersburg, the city was found to be evacuated."



## **Surrender of Petersburg**

The city was formally surrendered to General Grant on the 3d of April, 1865, by a committee of three, Mayor W. W. Townes, Mr. D'Arcy Paul and Mr. Charles F. Collier, acting in accordance with a formal resolution passed by the Common Council, of which Mr. J. Pinckney Williamson is the only surviving member.

Mr. Townes was mayor for many years. Mr. Collier also was later an honored mayor, and Mr. D'Arcy Paul's name is dear to every citizen for his philanthropy and for his public services. He founded and endowed the Methodist Female Orphan Asylum.

## **The Amelia Tragedy**

All day during May 3d Lee's forces hastened to Amelia Court House—twenty thousand gaunt veterans that might still hope to cut their way through and unite with Johnston's forces in North Carolina. It was to Amelia that Lee has ordered supplies to be sent. "Here a dire and unlooked-for anguish befell him." He found that the train of cars loaded with provisions for his army had reached Amelia Court House the afternoon before, but through a mistake had been sent on to Richmond and was in the hands of the enemy.

## **Surrender at Appomattox**

This was the real end. The army could not be held together without food. "Half of the force," says Swinton, "was broken up into foraging parties." There was no further hope to strike the foe in detail and thus win to safety. The retreat became an attempt to escape, and the surrender at Appomattox on the 9th of April, after Gordon's brave attempt to cut his way through, was a surrender to starvation. After Amelia there is only the record of the death-throes of the Army of Northern Virginia, "which, vital in all its parts, died only with its annihilation."

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## **The Spirit of Petersburg**

Thus three centuries of the strategy of war and of the arts of peace have left their varying memorials here, and thus one may strip off the decades and the centuries, layer after layer of time, yet

in each layer of time, in each decade or each century, there abides still the unchanging spirit of a sturdy, brave, homogeneous people. The qualities that gave Petersburg vitality and initiative and wealth and leadership in the past, still keep the historic city in the front rank of Virginia communities. The deeds of the fathers have not been a matter of mere pride but a call and an inspiration to equal deeds. Thus in the midst of the bustle of the active life of today, the city keeps a dignity and beauty that has something of the charm of an elder and a better day.

## **A Notable Fact**

But this is not the specific charm of the city, for its distinguishing characteristic is yet to be mentioned. Not only does the historic city keep its vitality, after having had an active share in the notable deeds of America and after having been an integral part of the history of the section and of the nation. Not only does it have the dignity and inspiration of a heroic past and the energy and activity of a busy city of wealth and enterprise today. The most striking fact about the city is the unbroken continuity of its historic life, which is the sure guarantee of its continued loyalty to the principles and standards that have contributed to its primacy in the past. Its people are the offspring of the men and women that have made it famous.

If a list were made of the names of the citizens mentioned in this sketch of three hundred years, it would be found that every one of these names is a present and living force in the community of today.

Of what other city in America may this be said?

## **The Appomattox River**

So runs the story of Petersburg and the fifteen miles of river history. As the first English expedition across the mountains started from Bellevue at one end of this line, so the latest American shipments of munitions overseas go from City Point and Hopewell at the other end. And the stretch of river between has mirrored in its placid waters all the sunshine and all the gloom of American history.

## **"The Reverend Sire"**

If one might personify the Appomattox, as Milton did the Cam, what a "reverend sire" he would be "with garments weedy and with bonnet sedge," and what moving tales he could tell. From the seventeenth century he would give the picture



of Batte and his gallant companions setting out from Fort Henry for their Western Expedition. From the eighteenth century he would tell of courtly Colonel Byrd and his journeys to the Dividing Line and to the Land of Eden; of the stout Colonials and their grapple with the British at Blandford and Pocahontas Bridge. From the nineteenth century he would describe McRae and his brave

boys of 1812, and tell of Lee and his gaunt veterans in the sixties. From the twentieth century he would tell us of the munition plants of Hopewell and the great cantonment of Camp Lee and all the varied activities of the World War. But in each century he would tell us most of the devoted and noble people that lived their lives and fought their battles here for home and fireside.







